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ABSTRACT

The three areas of educational activity recognized by the Dutch have developed historically into distinct and separate institutionalized sectors for educational provision for adults. These areas are knowledge-based, skill-based, and value-based. Each is the responsibility of a different governmental department and cabinet minister. Educational provision has also been influenced by the social cleavages between Roman Catholics, Protestants, and secularists. The 1970s have been a decade of advisory committees, initiatives, official experiments, and policy discussions. The three ministries involved in adult education have appointed committees to study open schools, local educational networks, open universities, and paid educational leave. Results of these committees include open school projects and 12 developmental projects to enhance further educational networks. Grassroots projects have emerged as the source of adult basic education, literacy work, discussion groups, consciousness-raising activities, refresher courses, new horizon activities for women, educational work with cultural minorities, and activities for the long-term unemployed. Three options regarding adult education seem to be available to the government: integrated, incremental, and limited policies. The emerging project policy covers the Open School Projects, experiments with local educational networks, literacy work, educational work with cultural minorities, and preretirement courses. (YLB)

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1. Background to adult education in the Netherlands

1.1. The past ten years in the Netherlands have been characterised by a renewed interest in educational provision for adults. There have been many official and unofficial initiatives, and increasing pressure for a concerted public policy in this often forgotten area of education in the Dutch welfare state. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Netherlands possess a long history of educational movements and a correspondingly rich variety of institutions concerned with the educational needs of Dutch adults. This complex history of adult education development is not unimportant in gaining insight into and some understanding of current developments and issues.

1.2. The Dutch recognise three distinct terms to distinguish different forms of educational activity, each with its own dominant learning orientations, ideas about content, ways of working with adult learners and the uses to which adults apply their learning. The Dutch refer to these three areas of educational activity as being:

"onderwijs" - with a knowledge-based orientation directed to formal educational qualifications;

"scholing" - with a skill-based orientation directed to social and technical aptitudes;

"vorming" - with a value-based orientation directed to the social and personal development of the individual.

These three areas of educational activity have developed historically into distinct and separate institutionalised sectors for educational provision for adults, with each being the responsibility of a different government department and cabinet minister. Knowledge-based activities, such as evening and day schools for adults, correspondence education, and compulsory general education for young workers, are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science; skill-based activities, such as occupational training, fall under the Ministry of Social Affairs; while the value-based activities, such as social and political education, community education, and residential adult education, are the concern of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (see appendix I).

This process of institutionalisation of the constituent components of education into separate sectors of policy and organisation has resulted in the existence of important differences with regard to:

- constitutional arrangements governing each area;
- legal regulations and norms;
- degrees of centralisation and decentralisation of decision-making;
- financial regulations and subsidies;
- employment of professional and volunteer personnel.

Until very recently there was no generally accepted collective term to refer to this complex provision of adult education. The term "volwassenen educatie" - adult education - has gained ground since 1975, and can have two connotations. In its restrictive usage it refers to part-time activities in the form of regular course work. In its extensive usage it includes the area of out-of-school or non-formal education. This is mainly the concern of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work and involves the educational mass media, libraries, museums and community development.

1.3. The rich variety of educational provision in the Netherlands has been influenced historically by a fundamental feature of Dutch social life. This is a reference to the "zuilen" or pillars on which Dutch society is organised. These pillars are a reflection of the deep rooted social cleavages between Roman Catholics, Protestants and secularists, and influence all forms of social organisation.

The three pillars are manifested in the political parties, interest groups, trade unions, press and television etc. Education is obviously central to the perpetuation of the pillar system in Dutch life. The social and political history of the Netherlands in the last century is one of the struggle of the Catholic and Protestant groups against the secular state school system and for recognition of denominational private schools. The "school issue" was resolved in the constitutional settlement of 1917 and consequent educational legislation. This resulted in constitutional recognition of equal rights for denominational schools alongside the secular state schools, and with 100% state finance for all formal educational institutions up to the university level. The denominational schools cater for 80% of all provision.

The emancipation struggle and consequent pacification has equally important consequences for educational activities with adults, and not only in the area of value-based education where ideological differences are most apparent. The so-called "private initiative" or denominational organisation of adult education alongside state provision on a secular basis is of vital significance. Indeed it is not only a lively political issue, but remains a constitutional issue of some magnitude with regard to proposals for a legal right to adult education. A consequence of this dominant feature of social and educational life in the Netherlands is that governments have tended to perform a "night-watchman" role in which they react to developments in the private sphere in their policy formulation and perform regulatory functions with regard to financing etc. Consultation between government and pressure groups is dominated by the pillars up to the highest level and has consequences for the various policy options in the area of adult education.

1.4. The above issues are of great significance when we turn to the efforts in the seventies to develop a more constructive government policy towards adult education and a more coherent system of provision. Under the influence of international discussion about permanent education during the 1960's in UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the interest of the Dutch in this policy concept was aroused at an early stage. A report published by the national association for out-of-school education emphasized the need for greater co-operation and integration between the different educational activity areas and ideological groupings as a precondition for realizing permanent education which it defined as:
"a cultival-political principle supporting a coordinated, integrated and balanced structure of provision which offers every individual throughout life the appropriate opportunities to satisfy educational, social and cultural needs and to develop personally both at leisure and in work to the benefit of the individual and the community".

This report coincided with a series of national conferences organised characteristically within the different educational activity areas with their respective pressure groups and field organisations. The so-called "purple bible" of 1969 placed the following issues on the agenda for the future development of adult education:

- the need for a co-ordinated government policy;
- greater integration of the separate educational activity areas;
- improved co-operation between institutions;
- better planning at the local level;
- a more flexible response to new educational needs;
- greater accessibility for disadvantaged groups.

2. Developments under government supervision

2.1. The period of reflection and discussion in conferences produced two relatively distinct possibilities for future development. Use of the mass media in distance education became a major option for those favouring second-chance education in the form of an "open school". Co-operation between existing institutions and forms of educational activity at the local level were stressed by those interested in creating local "educational centres" and "educational networks". In the same period a third option emerged in the form of direct intervention to regulate the existing forms of provisions, such as the Correspondence Education Act of 1971 which introduced a registration requirement and an inspectorate for the knowledge-based educational activities. Concerted government initiative emerged with the left of centre coalition government of 1973 which sailed under the flag of "the redistribution of knowledge, power and income". This government was committed in general terms to setting- up an open school for adults and the decentralisation of decision-making in regard to social welfare provision to the local authorities.

2.2. In 1974 the three ministries involved in adult education jointly appointed an Open School Committee. This advisory committee was requested to examine the planning, structure and financing of an open school, although no clear decision about its educational level or target groups had been taken by the government. It soon became clear that the Open School Committee regarded second-chance education for the educationally disadvantaged as the most appropriate area of operation for the open school. A separate Open University Committee was consequently established by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Open School Committee decided that the open school should operate at the educational level appropriate to the last two years of primary education and the first two years of general secondary education. The specific target groups for the open school operation were defined in the Committee's first report as:

- young adults between 17 and 30 years of age;
- women of all ages;
- working adults above 45 years of age.

These were to be regarded as mutually exclusive target groups in three experimental projects. The educational structure of the open school was set out in the Committee's third report in terms of a multi-media system. This was to comprise:

- the use of radio and television programmes provided by the various existing media-organisations;
- printed materials produced by the institutions for correspondence education;
- local groups involving participants and their tutors.

In 1976 a central organisation was created in the form of an Open School Foundation for a three-year experimental period. The Open School was to be set up in 14 locations each with 150 participants. In each location an Open School team, was established and was to concern itself with one of the target groups. The Open School was intended to develop the appropriate educational methods for the target groups, and operated at the local level separately and alongside the existing institutions, although these were represented in the Open School Foundation structure and local advisory groups. A central curriculum plan was developed and was intended to provide an integration of knowledge, skills and value orientations. This centrally developed curriculum comprised three types of units:

- knowledge-based units e.g. languages, geography, biology etc.;
- skill-based units e.g. discussion techniques, writing letters etc.;
- value-based units e.g. themes such as housing, health, money matters etc.

It was intended that the participants should plan their own learning programmes in relation to their personal learning needs in terms of "indicative curriculum planning". In other words, personal interests were regarded as indicative of the choice to make from centrally developed learning materials.

Various logistical problems delayed the start and the Open School began its three-year experimental period in september 1977. It was intended that the knowledge and methods developed in the experimental period would be disseminated to other institutions at a later stage, and the Open School was regarded by many as a method of working with disadvantaged adults rather than being a new permanent form of provision.

Additional to the 14 official locations, the Open School media programmes and correspondence materials were made available to so- called "spontaneous Open School groups" and to individual participants in the tradition of distance education. The spontaneous groups were organised by existing institutions, and received none of the financial and other facilities available to the official locations; they have to charge fees, pay for materials, and cannot provide free crèche facilities, etc. In contrast to the individual form of participation, the spontaneous groups have flourished in difficult circumstances and with some 300 groups now form an important form of Open School activity in the Netherlands. Resulting from a vote in the Dutch parliament, the Ministry of Education has now agreed to pay each group ƒ 1.000,- to cover miscellaneous costs for a one-year period.

The manifest need for second-chance education among the target groups of the Open School experiment is clearly indicated in the waiting-lists in the 14 official locations and the rapid growth of the spontaneous groups. This need is especially apparent among women and 80% of the participants are female. However, the most appropriate organisational form for an Open School, and the most relevant learning methods remain unresolved issues, and are not unrelated. The local groups were originally conceived as the periphery of a multi-media system, but appear to be vital in working with the target groups involved. The role of experience in adult learning has been increasingly recognised in the Open School, and has led to a reconsideration of locally developed learning materials and increasing interest in experience-based learning. Both the organisational and pedagogical issues in the Open School are reflections of attempts to integrate the knowledge-, skill-, and value-based forms of education.

2.3. The second main line development in official policy has been the concern for improved local co-ordination and planning of all forms of educational work with adults. This stems in part from the commitment of the 1973 coalition government to the decentralisation of decision-making powers from central to local government in the whole sphere of social welfare provision which comprises education, recreation and social work. In this perspective the three distinct forms of educational activity should be

planned at the local level in order to assure that needs and provisions are more effectively balanced. In 1975 the three responsible Ministries appointed an advisory Committee for Local Educational Networks. In contrast to the Committee Open School this committee did not directly lead to an experimental period alongside its advisory work. Nevertheless, a great deal of practical experience was available to the committee as a consequence of the government decision to proceed with decentralisation of local educational work in 1977. This area was to be a test-bed for decentralisation and local planning.

In the task description of the committee educational networks were described as "local or regional structures for the performance of basic tasks in support of a system of permanent education comprising all forms of educational activities for adults". The committee spent a great deal of time in determining its own specific options for educational networks and the problems experienced in the practice of local co-ordination. In general terms three options were available:

- stimulating co-operation between existing institutions;
- establishing educational centres to support existing work;
- determining the responsibilities of central and local government in the planning of adult education.

A specific concern was the integration of the Open School in local educational networks at the end of the experimental period.

The rich provision of educational activities, their legal and organisational diversity, and differences in degrees of centralisation and decentralisation makes co-ordination at the local level no mean task. Seen from the viewpoint of the potential participants - an important emphasis in the work of this committee - the wide variety of provision is a problem in terms of:

- the provision of information and guidance about existing provision;
- the passive attitude of institutions to new educational needs and emerging target groups;
- variations in financial support for participants;
- differences in entry requirements and access to recognised qualifications.

The Committee on Local Educational Networks chose as its dominant theme the relationship between the needs of adults and the provision of adult education. Educational networks at the local level should seek to optimalise this relationship by creating an appropriate local infrastructure with basic guarantees being established by government legislation. This has led, through the various reports, to three main areas of concern as voiced in the fifth and definitive report of the committee in 1979.:

- the need to develop democratic planning mechanisms at the local authority level, with the role of central government being limited to that of basic constitutional and legal guarantees for a right to basic education for all adults;
- the need to support potential participants by creating educational centres which would provide information and other active supporting facilities for adults, such as the development of outreach strategies and advocacy functions;
- the need to create educational workshops to support educational workers in developing appropriate methods and materials for adult education.

The Committee has proposed a system of basic provision which should be guaranteed for all adults by central government and should receive priority. This basic provision for all adults would consist of a constitutional right to:

- adult basic education in the form of general or vocational education as required by the individual;
- specific facilities for adults engaged in emancipatory activities and those severely disadvantaged e.g. women, migrant workers, racial minorities etc.;
- an active recruitment directed to reaching the socially disadvantaged and non-participating social groups.

A specific result of the committee's work - it no longer exists as we shall see - is the installation during 1980 of 12 development projects which will take the development of educational networks a step further. These projects are concerned in differing degrees with developing in practice the working principles most appropriate for:

- decentralised systems of democratic local educational planning;
- educational centres and support services for potential participants;
- educational workshops for curriculum development and educational resources.

The chosen locations are based on local authorities where significant developments were already afoot, and they are to function as practical examples of good practice to others.

2.4. The interest of the Dutch for multi-media systems in adult education has given rise not only to the Open School, but also to the idea of an Open University. An Open University Preparatory Committee presented its definitive report to the Minister of Education and Science in March 1979. The Open University is in the eyes of the Dutch a multi-media alternative to the normal universities. The assumptions are that this form of distance education at the university level will be more efficient and cheaper. The Open University will provide additional places for students in those areas of study which are oversubscribed in the normal universities, and in this sense it will present an alternative route to a university degree. Given the high drop-out rate in Dutch universities it is expected that many drop-outs will take-up their studies again in the Open University. Since it will not demand formal entry-qualifications the Open University is also regarded as a second-chance opportunity for those social groups excluded from existing university education. A great demand for its facilities is expected among women.

The Open University dutch-style will offer at the start degree courses in those areas of study where the demand is extensive and which are relatively cheap. A start will be made with English, legal studies, the behavioural sciences and educational studies, to be followed by economics, technology and management studies. The natural sciences and social science will follow at a much later date. In the multi-media system the emphasis will be placed upon correspondence material in conjunction with television and radio programmes, both being supported by a regional organisation for counselling and study guidance.

The proposals of the Preparatory Committee have come in for a quite considerable degree of criticism from various quarters. It is considered by many to be no more than a cheap way of providing university edu-

cation for a larger percentage of the age-group. Others regard it as a second-chance opportunity for those who have dropped-out of the normal universities without addressing the causes of the drop-out rate - about 40%. Yet others see the main beneficiaries as those with a non-university professional qualification to get a university degree. Reaching new target groups is not seen as a priority by the Preparatory Committee, and its significance for those with a limited educational background is regarded as being extremely limited by those emphasizing the necessary links with other forms of adult education. Such criticisms have indeed been voiced by the government's own Education Advisory Committee - the most prestigious advisory body in Dutch Education. This committee pointed further to the lack of innovation in the choice of traditional university courses which are over-subscribed, the over emphasis on correspondence materials drawn from existing university courses, and the limited provision of local study groups.

The Minister of Education and Science and the Preparatory Committee have made little of such criticisms. The Minister quickly introduced a policy document to parliament within six months of receiving the committee's report, which suggests that the Minister accepted in bulk the proposals made to him. At the time of announcing his decision to establish an Open University, the Minister announced the setting up of an Open University Development Foundation, and discussions began over the location of the headquarters. Budgetary allocations amounted to f13 million in 1980 increasing to f44 million in 1984. The reserves concerning an Open University continue to be voiced, and the original budgetary allocation for 1980 was reduced by two-thirds by the Dutch parliament. Nevertheless, the parliament approved the policy document which gave the green light to the Ministry to carry on with its preparations. A bill has yet to be introduced which will provide a legal recognition for the Open University on a permanent basis.

The only change of any significance in the plans produced by the Dutch parliament was the reduction of the age-qualification to 18 years of age. The main advisory committees to the government - the Education Advisory Committee, the Social-Economic Council, and the Higher Education

Council - had all proposed raising the age-qualification to 25 years. These committees have continued to express their fundamental reservations concerning the priority given by the government to the Open University, and the need to strengthen other forms of adult education for the less advantaged. The Open University Development Foundation has been established, and the headquarters have been allocated to a city in the extreme south of the Netherlands as a contribution to regional employment policy. The management team is now being recruited.

2.5. An important precondition to increasing the participation of employed adults and house-wives in various forms of adult education are often of a financial nature. Leave from paid and unpaid work has gradually become an issue in discussions concerning recurrent education, most usually in terms of paid educational leave. In september 1977, the Social-Economic Council - an advisory committee representing employers and trade unions - established a Paid Educational Leave Committee to prepare proposals for the Minister of Social Affairs.

The Committee produced an interim report within a year. In the first place it extended its area of concern from working adults to include the unpaid work of house-wives. Interesting here is that house-work is regarded as unpaid work and is given the same recognition in determining entitlements to paid leave as paid employment. Secondly, the Committee suggested a priority for those with a limited educational background, the long-term unemployed, those threatened with unemployment, and those soon to retire. Thirdly, it was proposed that the level of income should determine the amount of entitlement to leave with the average of national earnings being taken as a norm above which no entitlement would be possible. For couples the joint income would be considered against a doubling of the norm earnings. In this way a house- wife could qualify when her husband earns more than the average of earnings but not more than double the average. Under the norm family earnings would entitle both to paid leave. Taken as a whole such criteria would mean that 45% of the adult population would qualify. Fourthly, the committee proposed that the resources should come from central government funds. Lastly, a legal right to paid educational leave was preferred above the negotiation of rights to leave through employer-

union negotiations. This was seen as vital to the inclusion of unpaid work in the system.

The government took a long time to respond to these proposals and did so rather negatively. The broadening of paid leave to others than the employed was regarded as a long-term objective. The Ministers agreed in general terms with the other priorities and criteria suggested by the committee, but suggested a further refinement in terms of the limited financial resources available. This last point further leads the government to reject solely the use of government funds and to suggest the possibility of instituting a system of levies on workers and employers. A legal right for all adults to paid educational leave was rejected and the role of joint negotiations between the employers and unions were regarded as the most appropriate path to follow. This reply by the government led to a vigorous response by the Paid Educational Leave Committee. It finds that the government places too much emphasis on educational leave in relation to labour market problems rather than principles of social justice. The Ministers for their part have taken the committee to task for going outside its terms of reference by including unpaid work in its proposals. In the meantime the main trade union organisations have tended to support the advisory committee, but see possibilities in the short-term through joint labour agreements and are prepared to accept a levy system. They also join the committee in decidedly rejecting the restriction of paid leave to job-related training, and they give priority to leave for the Open School and pre-retirement courses.

The Paid Educational Leave Committee is continuing with its work and three main priorities have been established. In the first place it is considering further the content of paid educational leave. Should this be a free choice from all educational options, or should it be restricted to job-related training? The committee regards the provision of couselling services and measures to stimulate the use of paid leave as basic to helping the less educated to benefit from any forthcoming opportunities. Secondly, the committee is concerned with the decision-making structures surrounding paid leave. To what degree should the central government be able to set priorities, who should get leave, and under with conditions? What should be the local organisational structure with regard to

the nature of educational provision, the counselling and recruitment services, and the integration of opportunities for paid leave with other educational facilities for adults. Thirdly, it is considering the various possibilities for financing educational leave. It is mainly interested in integrating the maintenance of income during educational leave with other forms of social insurance and the income policy pursued by the government. This could be of great importance at a time of increasing unemployment, a strict policy on incomes and social benefits and the absence of resources for additional educational provision on a large scale.

3. Initiatives at grass-roots level

3.1. Outside the institutionalised forms of provision for adult education, there have been a great many ad hoc initiatives at the local level during the 1970's. Often working without financial support and depending on volunteer workers, these grass-roots projects have developed in the margins of the three main educational policy sectors. We find here the sources of adult basic education, literacy work, discussion groups, and consciousness-raising activities as a response to the social and educational needs of diverse social groups. Refresher courses for adults, new horizon activities for women, literacy work, educational work with cultural minorities, and activities for the long-term unemployed have emerged as neighbourhood educational projects. They stress various aspects of non-formal education such as from individual and group problems in daily-life, collective consciousness-raising, and mobilising the socially and educationally disadvantaged. Such projects have often arisen from local coalitions of community and social workers, local action groups, residents groups, and self-help activities at the level of the neighbourhood and have much in common with community education as out-of-school adult education. The existence and rapid growth of these grass-roots projects has in many ways demonstrated to the government and local authorities the real educational needs of adults with a limited educational background. In many cases they have preceded government initiatives especially in the areas of adult basic education, literacy work, and educational activities with women.

3.2. The basic education and literacy projects share many of the same characteristics in their origins and organisation. One of the most well-known - and now best researched - adult basic education project is "Ouders-op-Herhaling", which started in 1973 as a refresher course for adults in a working-class neighbourhood in Leiden. This project has become a symbol for the now 300 similar projects organised in a national pressure-group for community education provided in local neighbourhood centres. Literacy work developed in the same way during the early 1970's and only became a public issue in 1977. There are about 300 literacy projects organised in the appropriate national pressure-groups for literacy work.

Both types of projects are directed to the educationally disadvantaged adults with an often uncompleted primary education and limited secondary education, and can be regarded as working at a level of disadvantage greater than that of the Open School projects. The participants are mainly married women with little post-school experience of adult education activities, and their learning needs are in the first instance clearly remedial. In the course of their participation in refresher courses other learning interests emerge which are of greater long-term significance to them.

The refresher courses are baeed on the last two years of primary education and literacy work is directed to basic reading and writing skills. Opportunities are provided in both types of projects for group and individual organisation of learning. Men seem to prefer the individual approach to counselling and learning, while women are more open to group-work. The learning in groups is generally aimed at an integration of knowledge and value-based educational activities with the strict basic education being linked to social awareness of local issues and problems. The neighbourhood basis of these projects is most clearly seen in the increasing organisation of learning groups around specific local issues such as redevelopment, housing, and play facilities for children. Tenants associations and other action groups have regularly asked for courses on discussion techniques and how to prepare reports of meetings etc. Other demands for educational activities come from parent groups associated with local schools, and playgroups. The interest of some participants in further educational aspirations is seen as legitimate and many neighbourhood projects have developed preparatory courses for the adult day schools and the Open School. Some have organised spontaneous open school groups.

The neighbourhood organisation of the grass-roots projects has a number of consequences. They are generally small in scale with the most well developed having no more than 150 participants in different courses, and depend to a large degree on volunteers. Full-time staff are few and far between. While their independence of established institutions is regarded as the guaranteed of their ability to respond flexibly to needs, it also

entails their financial penury in that they can make no claims on a regular subsidy system. They represent an additional claim on the resources of the local authorities, and only a handful of authorities have given any significant financial support.

Central government support has tended to be in the form of short-term grants from the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work rather than the Ministry of Education, yet again emphasizing the division between the formal and non-formal sectors.

The numerical significance of these projects should not be underestimated. The adult basic education and literacy projects together provide learning opportunities for 15.000 participants, to which should be added the 4.500 participants in the Open School spontaneous groups. For some observers the strength of the neighbourhood projects is their apparent success in lowering barriers and making adult education accessible to the socially and educationally disadvantaged. Their mode of operation in the margins of and across the boundaries between existing policy sectors demonstrates for others that educational needs cannot be administratively allocated to the different educational sectors. This is an argument for an integrated approach to adult education provision at the neighbourhood level, and a call for the creation of an appropriate financing system. The central government sees a partial solution in the future form of the Open School.

3.3. A major development in the 1970's has been the increasing number of groups in Dutch society concerned with educational and consciousness-raising activities with women. This results from the very active emancipation movement in the Netherlands, and the wide diversity of women's groups. The emergence of new groups is partly a reaction to the rigidity of the traditional women's organisations which are organised in terms of the pillars. Among the many concerns of the women's movement, the significant educational disadvantage of women in Dutch society has been a major priority. This educational disadvantage has been brought into relation with the social disadvantage of women in relation to working opportunities, traditional sex-roles in the family etc. As a result educational work with women has taken on a clearly consciousness-raising

dimension, and is increasingly organised by women for women. Many projects have developed at the local level with broad educational goals varying from second-chance opportunities to more radical social awareness activities.

A very good illustration of this type of educational work with women is to be found in "Vrouwen Oriënteren zich in de Samenleving" - or social awareness activities with women. These local discussion groups for women started in a small way in the province of North-Holland in 1973. The VOS course consists of a number of discussion group meetings on a regular basis, and are organised for women with limited educational backgrounds. Since their start in 1973 the VOS courses have spread radpily throughout the Netherlands and are now available in most areas of the country. They are organised locally and are increasingly finding roots at the neighbourhood level. The VOS is organised by volunteers mostly engaged in some way in the women's movement and are in the main financially self-supporting. There are no regular subsidies and grants available for the local VOS-group work. A few local authorities provide some financial support, and one or two provincial councils have apppointed regional advisors.

Central to VOS-work is encouragement of greater social awareness among women of their position in the family, their opportunities in education and employment, and their political responsibilities. The approach is thematic and in each course a number of basic themes recurs e.g. politics, personal relationships, child-rearing, employment and education. The creation of self-confidence among women with little educational experience is seen as vital to the VOS in its work with unorganised women who are not active or indeed members of more traditional women's organisations. Emphasis is placed upon the experiences of the participants in the programmes, and learning through experience is seen as a basic method in the VOS-work, rather than a basic course organisation with pre-prepared materials. Although the VOS-groups are seen as a broad social orientation for women, it is clear that for many participants the VOS provides an opportunity for women to become more aware of their educational needs through discussion with others in the same situation.

3.4. Consideration of the Open School experiment and of educational networks should not distract attention from a very specific development in an already existing form of educational provision for adults. The possibility to follow general non-vocational secondary education has long been available to Dutch adults in the form of evening secondary schools. The available subjects and syllabuses are legally the same as those applying in compulsory youth education and allow adults to gain a comparable secondary education certificate. Teaching methods and materials are often similar to the compulsory schools. These schools tend to perform a completion function for young adults leaving compulsory education without a full secondary certificate, and their function as second-chance education for older adults has been questioned.

Significant changes in this knowledge-based form of education for adults have taken place since 1975. A normal secondary school for compulsory education in the province of North-Holland was threatened by closure as a result of falling numbers. It was decided by the school management to offer day-time classes for adults at the level equivalent to the Certificate of Secondary Education. This new learning opportunity for adults was an immediate success especially among married women with a limited or uncompleted secondary education. The legal requirements are the same as those applying to the normal compulsory secondary schools as is the case with the evening schools for adults. In the intervening years this innovation has spread very rapidly throughout the Netherlands and now caters for some participants, 95% of whom are women between 35 and 50 years of age.

This development was a quite legitimate use of existing educational legislation in the Netherlands, but at first the government was hesitant in its policy and the provision of the necessary funding and staffing. Political pressure in parliament led to the interesting situation in 1978 of one million guilders being voted off the budget for the Open School experiment and diverted to these secondary day-schools for adults. The situation has since been regularised and the adult day-schools are now able to progress under the existing laws and financial arrangements. This entails the automatic claim to resources when certain student numbers are achieved.

A barrier to participation has been the legal requirement that students should follow at least three subjects each year, thus enabling them to complete a full secondary school certificate in four years. Pressure has led to modifications of legal requirements and it is now possible to follow one or more subjects and to gain partial certificates. Study skills have been a problem for those who have not undertaken any systematic learning activity in the many years since leaving school. Many secondary day-schools for adults have either started their own preparatory courses, or co-operated with other, more informal agencies.

As will be seen in the concluding section, this development in the knowledge-based sector of 'hard' educational qualifications suggests some interesting problems for the integration of different forms of educational activity in adult education. The role of the adult day- and evening-secondary schools in the future of the Open School and in local educational networks has yet to be defined, and different viewpoints exist.

3.5. The spontaneous developments such as neighbourhood adult basic education and consciousness-raising work with women have clearly demonstrated the wide-ranging needs of Dutch adults for involvement in educational activities. These spontaneous projects emphasize the requirement for a flexible local organisation in lowering the thresholds to participation, an open approach to learning needs related to the social situation of difficult-to-reach groups. Their "outreach" approach at the neighbourhood level indicate some ways to mobilise disadvantaged groups and make adult education more accessible. These spontaneous developments have often stimulated the more traditional forms of provision to rethink their approach and explore new needs among adults. However, while the grass-roots projects of recent years have done vital preparatory work in widening horizons and stimulating educational demand they have received little or no recognition from the public authorities. The disadvantage of the spontaneous projects is the threat to their continuity arising from their inability to make claims on public resources within established channels of funding. Even at the local level support for this work necessitates a transfer of resources from long-established forms of provision and important vested interests. Only in the case of a few local authorities has decentralisation of responsibilities for local educational planning resulted in new priorities and support for this work. The decentralisation policy is a neutral budgetary operation which creates no additional resources for the local authorities.

4. Policy Options

4.1. As has been argued here, the 1970's can be seen as a decade of conferences, initiatives, experiments and policy discussions. The time would now appear to be ripe for definitive lines in central government policy to be set out towards the future. This would entail establishing a basic framework for adult education, selecting the forms of existing and new provision to be integrated in such a framework, and creating the organisational and financial conditions necessary to its development. For many reasons 1981 is regarded as a key year. Late in 1978 the three ministries involved in adult education promised the Dutch parliament that a co-ordinated policy document would be presented during 1980. At the end of 1979 both the Committee Open School and the Committee Local Educational Networks completed their advisory work and were dismissed. These two committees have produced a vast array of advisory reports, discussion documents and research reports, which collectively provide the building blocks from which a new framework could be established. The Open School experiment in 14 locations was due to be completed in the summer of 1980, while the decentralisation of local educational planning became fully effective in january 1980. The policy options revolve around the co-ordination of newly developed forms of educational work with adults seeking an integration of knowledge, skill, and value-based forms of education, and their place in local educational networks resulting from decentralised decision-making. It is a time of great uncertainty and tension for both official and unofficial projects with regard to their future place in a new framework, and their continuity in many cases dependent upon the policy options chosen by the ministries. Three global options seem to be available:

- an integrated policy for all forms of provision within the decentralisation of decision-making to local authorities;
- an incremental policy for the medium-term, providing additional funding for new forms of provision, a limited development of educational networks, in addition to existing financial arrangements;
- a limited policy for the short-term, providing marginal support for a few projects without modification of existing forms of organisation and finance in the three educational sectors.

4.2. The first indications of policy development began to emerge at the end of 1979. The least controversial proposal was that regarding the provision of additional funds for the development of 12 experiments with local educational networks under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work. These educational network projects have become operational during 1980 and will last for three years.

The most controversial proposals were those in relation to the future form of the Open School etc. In late 1979 the three ministries - with the Ministry of Education as the co-ordinating body - produced draft proposals for arrangements for the Open School, literacy work, and educational work with cultural minorities. These proposals constitute a so-called project-based development policy with central government financing for three years.

The Open School is to be transferred to existing institutions in the 14 experimental locations, and 16 new locations are to be established. These 30 locations can claim financing for two staff-members and up to ƒ100.000 per year for other costs - this is approximately one-third of the staffing available in the experimental locations.

Literacy work is to be financed at the rate of ƒ1000.- per participant per year with a ceiling of 2000 participants over the whole country in 1980, and 6000 in 1983.

Cultural minorities are to receive similar help per participant, with national ceiling of 8000 in 1980 and 11.000 in 1983 - there are 450.000 in this category in the Netherlands.

Individual institutions can claim these resources for their activities providing they meet certain requirements laid down by the Ministries. Additional funds will be made available for national and regional development work provided by the Dutch Institute for Adult Education and a limited number of provincial advisors.

Existing projects which cannot avail themselves of these new financial resources are consequently dependent on their local authorities and local educational planning decisions.

With regard to both literacy work and cultural minorities these proposals have now become definitive. Most of the institutions concerned are those outside the existing financial arrangements for knowledge-based educational provision, and resort in most cases under the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work.

4.3. The draft proposals for the Open School have given rise to heated discussions and the many modifications to the proposals have only added to the controversy. The issue at stake in the proposals for the Open School is that of the integration of the knowledge, skill and value-based components of education. The Open School experiment was intended to provide working experience with such integration and to establish basic guidelines. These have been formulated in an Open School document called: "A Framework for Open School Work", and are intended to be implemented in the 30 new locations for the Open School. The organisational basis for these projects is regarded by many as an inadequate guarantee for integration in practice. In the draft proposals different types of institutions could apply for an Open School project. Many feared that knowledge-based institutions, for example, would claim the Open School work and do little to promote integration with skill, and value-based education. Indeed the national organisation for evening and dayschools for adults went so far as to claim the whole Open School operation for its own members, which would have involved placing the Open School entirely within the knowledge-based sector of the Ministry of Education.

The Open School Foundation and especially its field-workers in the locations protested strongly against this possibility which in their view would undermine the Open School idea of integration. A second set of proposals did nothing to reduce these fears, but rather increased them. It was proposed to allocate the knowledge-based aspects of the Open School to the appropriate existing institutions such as the day schools for adults, and the value-based aspects of the Open School should be provided by appropriate institutions such as neighbourhood centres. These proposals were in their totality rejected by the Open School organisation and other interested parties in the value-based sector. A recent third set of proposals maintains the separation of knowledge- and value-based aspects of the Open School in appropriate institutions, but requires that they co-operate in providing a joint programme while each retains its own specific responsibilities. These proposals have also been rejected by the Open School Foundation, which as a result of the long-drawn out negotiations has been extended for one year, as have the 14 locations. The integration of the institutionalised form of knowledge, skill and value-based educational provision in the future of the Open School presents fundamental problems, and are far from being solved.

4.4. The wheel turns full-circle when one notes that the Minister of Education has received approval for his plans for the Open School from the national consultancy council for education. This is the consultancy council in which the Minister consults with the representatives of the pillar organisations in Dutch education in the area of knowledge-based education. Indeed the pillars in Dutch society have been showing an increasing interest in adult education policy as this new area of government policy has emerged. Three separate but related issues produce strange coalitions of interest:

- the Ministry of Education works in a highly centralised manner in the Netherlands, and this can be partly explained by the vital importance of article 208 of the 1917 Constitution which lays down the central government's duty for a "continuing concern for education". This article refers to knowledge-based education and has led to close consultancy on policy between the Ministry and the pillar organisations;
- the constitutional arrangement does not cover skill and value-based education which can be decentralised to the local authorities under the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work;
- the decentralisation policy was originally intended in part to reduce the influence of the pillar organisations and open up participation in policy-making at the local level. At this level the pillars are less well organised and less influential as pressure groups.

In this context of traditional relationships the future form of the Open School has been caught up in a series of issues which are of constitutional importance, and of great importance for the whole of adult education in the Netherlands. If the knowledge-based component of the Open School is to be retained in the centralised policy sphere of the Ministry of Education, the basic Open School principle of the integration of knowledge, skills and values stands little chance of being realized on a more permanent basis. If the traditional interpretation of article 208 is maintained with its centralist implications, the chances of creating decentralised educational planning and local educational networks at the local level are restricted to those areas of policy resorting under the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work. A liberal interpretation of article 208 is favoured by the supporters of decentralisation who argue that a new general law for all adult education can be introduced without a modification of the 1917 constitution. This issue will have to be decided at

cabinet level and parliamentary approval for changes in the law will be required. Given the present composition of the parliament in the Netherlands the majority parties are likely to prefer the more traditional interpretation of the constitutional settlement.

4.5. The present situation of confusion in Dutch adult education illustrates the degree to which specific policy options available to the government are influenced by long-standing traditions in Dutch society and its educational institutions. This could entail a choice of options leading to the perpetuation of separate policy sectors for formal and non-formal adult education. The policy sector for formal education would be geared to educational diplomas and characterised by "hard" knowledge-based objectives. Alongside there would be a "soft" sector emphasing more diffuse individual and social objectives. Such fragmentation in policy, administrative and financial structures is to be seen in the recent decision of the Ministry of Education to allocate additional funds for 120 new appointments to day and evening school in the next financial year. Furthermore, within the ambit of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work a quite separate subsidy system has been introduced for emancipation activities with women which bears no direct relation to other forms of provision for non-formal education. Neither the increased provision for day and evening schools nor the proposals for the Open School, literacy work and cultural minorities etc., provide any regulation and funding on a broad basis for the many initiatives in neighbourhood work in adult education which have developed in recent years. The major policy proposal of the Committee for Local Educational Networks - the constitutional right of all adults to adult basic education - requires the recognition of the "social movement" for adult education and its integration in a system of basic provision at the local level. This suggests that permanent education needs to be located in the organisational forms through which adults give expression to their interests in adult aducation and its application in the wider community, rather than the incorporation of adult learning in institutionalised forms of knowledge-based education. An issue which has yet to be resolved in the Netherlands.

5. Policy Options in The Early 1980's

5.1. As has been argued here the 1970's in Dutch adult education can be seen as a decade of initiatives, official experiments, advisory committees, and policy discussions. The time would now appear to be ripe for definitive lines in central government policy to be set out towards the future. This would entail establishing a basic framework for adult education, selecting the forms of existing and new provision to be integrated in such a framework, and creating the organizational and financial contions necessary to its future development. Late in 1978 the three Ministers responsible for adult education promised the Dutch parliament that a co-ordinated policy document would be presented during 1980. The various committees had completed their extensive advisory tasks during 1980 and were disbanded - with the exception of that concerned with paid educational leave. The numerous reports produced by the committees, and extensive research into both official and unofficial projects, provide many building-blocks for a coherent government policy.

5.2. The promised policy document has not yet seen the light of day, but certain lines in government policy have emerged in the last couple of years. This emerging policy line is generally referred to in the Netherlands as a project policy, which provides incremental support for a limited number of projects for specific target groups. This project policy covers the following projects:

- the 14 Open School projects will be extended to 30 locations, with the work being transferred to existing institutions. Each new location can claim two project workers and ƒ 100,000 per year for material costs;
- 12 experiments with local educational networks have been approved and become operational during 1980;
- literacy work is to be financed at the rate of ƒ 1000 per participant per year, with a ceiling of 200 participants in 1980 over the whole country, expanding to 6000 in 1983;
- educational work with cultural minorities is to receive similar help with a national ceiling of 8000 participants in 1980 and 11,000 in 1983;
- pre-retirement-courses have been provided support though the setting up of a regional consultancy service;

- proposals for occupational retraining schemes are being prepared;
- proposals for paid educational leave have yet to emerge.

Additional funds are being made available for national and regional development work provided by the Dutch Institute for Adult Education. These various projects will be supported by advisory project committees, and the projects as a whole will be co-ordinated by a steering committee. Furthermore, the government has established an Adult Education Advisory Committee for the whole sector of adult education.

The Open University can be regarded as the last component of this system of projects receiving direct government assistance. Its organizational relationship to the other projects and the system of project management and advisory work is uncertain.

These diverse projects are expected to provide the backbone to the expected government policy document when it appears.

5.3. A number of problems remain. The project policy of the central government, as outlined above, provides direct central government finance for a limited numbers of practical projects which do not fall under existing financial arrangements. The spontaneous open school projects, and the numerous neighbourhood projects, are not covered by the new arrangements, and the evening and day-schools for adults have separate financial rights under the existing educational legislation. Activities not covered by the project policy or existing financial arrangements have to resort to their local authorities which now carry the decentralized responsibilities for those forms of adult education which previously were the concern of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work. These local authorities are now required to prepare a four year plan for adult education, and it is intended that these plans will be integrated in the longer term in local planning for all social welfare provision. However, those forms of adult education which fall under the Ministry of Education and Science are not being decentralized to the local authorities. This has been a constitutional issue during the last year which indicates the continuing strength of the horizontal and vertical forms of organisation in Dutch society and the field of adult education in particular.